

Having thus described the invention, what is claimed is:

1. A control system for operating a powered running board movably mounted on an automotive vehicle for deployment between a retracted position and an operative position, comprising:

a control module in operative communication with a drive mechanism for powering the movement of said running board, said control module being operative to send a drive signal to said drive mechanism to effect operation of said drive mechanism to cause movement of said running board, said control module further being operative to receive a position signal from said drive mechanism indicative of the deployment position of said running board; and

a memory module operatively connected to said control module to store a previously defined deployment position, said control module being operable to stop the operation of said drive mechanism when said position signal is indicative of said running board being moved to said previously defined deployment position.

2. The control system of Claim 1 further comprising:

a position switch for manually moving said running board to a desired position, said control module storing said

desired position in said memory module for subsequent deployment as said previously defined deployment position.

3. The control system of Claim 2 wherein said control module is operatively connected to sensors on said automotive vehicle for sensing predetermined conditions of said vehicle pertinent to the deployment of said running board, said sensors providing input signals to said control module.

4. The control system of Claim 3 wherein said control module requires predetermined input signals before sending said drive signal to said drive mechanism.

5. The control system of Claim 4 wherein said input signals includes a signal indicative of a vehicle door corresponding to said running board being opened.

6. The control system of Claim 5 wherein said memory module is operable to store multiple deployment positions, each said deployment position being independently selectable through a user defined input control.

7. The control system of Claim 6 wherein said multiple deployment positions correspond to pre-programmed deployment positions for said running board.

8. The control system of Claim 6 wherein said multiple deployment positions are independently defined through use of said position switch.

9. The control system of Claim 6 wherein one of said running boards is positioned on each opposing transverse side of said automotive vehicle.

10. A method of controlling the deployment of a running board movably mounted on an automotive vehicle for movement between a retracted position and an operative position comprising the steps of:

receiving input signals from vehicles sensors indicative of pre-selected vehicle conditions in a control module;

if all vehicle conditions permit deployment of said running board, retrieving from a memory module a stored deployment position defining a desired said operative position;

sending a drive signal from said control module to a drive mechanism operably powering the movement of said running board;

obtaining from said drive mechanism into said control module a feedback signal indicative of a present deployed position of said running board; and

stopping said drive mechanism when said feedback signal indicates said present deployed position is the same as said stored deployment position.

11. The method of Claim 10 wherein one of said input signals includes a signal indicating a vehicle door corresponding to said running board is opened.

12. The method of Claim 11 further comprising the step of:

returning said running board to said retracted position when said vehicle door sensor indicates said door is closed.

13. The method of Claim 12 wherein said stored deployment position is the previously deployed position of said running board.

14. The method of Claim 12 stored deployment position is defined by manually moving said running board into said desired operative position by a position switch operatively connected to said control module.

15. In an automotive vehicle including a vehicle frame having mounted thereon a running board movable between a

retracted position and an operative position, the improvement comprising:

a control system controlling the movement of said running board to position said running board at a predetermined deployed position when a vehicle door corresponding to said running board is opened.

16. The automotive vehicle of Claim 15 wherein said control system comprises:

a control module in operative communication with a drive mechanism for powering the movement of said running board, said control module being operative to send a drive signal to said drive mechanism to effect operation of said drive mechanism to cause movement of said running board, said control module further being operative to receive a position signal from said drive mechanism indicative of the deployment position of said running board; and

a memory module operatively connected to said control module to store a previously defined deployment position, said control module being operable to stop the operation of said drive mechanism when said position signal is indicative of said running board being moved to said previously defined deployment position.

17. The automotive vehicle of Claim 16 wherein said control system further comprises:

a position switch for manually moving said running board to a desired position, said control module storing said desired position in said memory module for subsequent deployment as said previously defined deployment position.

18.           The automotive vehicle of Claim 17 wherein said control module is operatively connected to sensors on said automotive vehicle for sensing predetermined conditions of said vehicle pertinent to the deployment of said running board, said sensors providing input signals to said control module, one of said input signals being indicative of said vehicle door being opened.

19.           The automotive vehicle of Claim 18 wherein said control module requires predetermined input signals before sending said drive signal to said drive mechanism.

20.           The automotive vehicle of Claim 19 wherein said memory module is operable to store multiple deployment positions, each said deployment position being independently selectable through a user defined input control.